

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of each boy or girl at one of the Ministry of Correctional Services' training schools or group homes is seen as a beginning: an opportunity for Ministry staff to provide each young person with the skills that are necessary if the individual is to be able to realize his or her potential and make a fresh start in life. The Ministry endeavours to provide programs which ensure that each child in its care will be exposed to a maximum of educational retraining and personal development.

Children are admitted to the training school system in Ontario only by order of the Court, following an appearance before a judge of the Provincial Court (Family Division). The Training Schools Act (provincial) and the Juvenile Delinquents Act (federal) form the legal basis under which a judge may order a child sent to a training school.

There are eleven training schools in Ontario which are the complete responsibility of the Ministry. One of these, St. John's School in Uxbridge, is operated by a Roman Catholic Religious Order but is financed entirely by the Province. Of the eleven schools, four are presently coeducational, and all but several of the specialized programs, such as that at the maximum security school for boys, will become coeducational in the near future.

EDUCATION

One of the first requirements in correctional education is to encourage students to accept the learning experience as a challenge rather than just a necessary daily routine. The program encourages learning by group participation, through which many students receive helpful socializing experiences. School curricula follow the guidelines of the Ontario Ministry of Education and each school is inspected regularly by their officials.

At Champlain School, located 45 miles east of Ottawa, and at Cecil Facer School in Sudbury the educational programs are bilingual.

In addition to the academic and vocational courses offered to students, a valuable program in basic life skills has been developed by the Ministry. Students are instructed in such skills as how to apply for a job, how to present oneself at an interview, how to shop economically, and many other aspects of daily life which may be totally unfamiliar to our wards.

RECREATION

Recreational programs are emphasized both as a general health measure and because of their high value in personality development. Many students in the schools have never participated either in individual types of recreation or in group activities, which are helpful in the development of social skills. Activities vary from school to school, and include interschool sports, cross-country skiing, arts and crafts, dramatics, indoor games, fashion shows and public speaking contests.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A most important aspect of recreation in a training school is the opportunity it provides for community interaction • sports teams compete with community schools and in inter-league competitions • schools hold dances to which university and students from the community are invited • students take part in such projects as pollution clean-up campaigns and Miles for Millions walks • students pay visits to historical sites and local events of interest • some students attend church in the community

LIBRARIES

Library facilities are provided at each school for recreational reading and as a source of information for school projects. Some 35,000 volumes are available throughout the schools and new books are constantly being added.

RELIGION

Chaplains are available to the students at all times for individual spiritual counseling. As members of the professional team, they also take part in assessment conferences and conduct group counseling sessions, in addition to their pastoral responsibilities.

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Every effort is made to encourage and develop staff at all levels. The Ministry runs numerous seminars, workshops, and conferences to increase knowledge and ability in specific areas as needs arise. A basic training program for supervisors of juveniles is provided to each new employee, and a Human Resources Development Plan and a Career Development Plan ensure that the Ministry's goals and the needs of the employee are fulfilled.

PROBATION/AFTERCARE

Probation/aftercare officers prepare comprehensive social and family histories on juveniles who are appearing before a judge of the Provincial Court (Family Division). These reports aid the judge in arriving at a disposition which will be in the best interests of the juvenile. The officers supervise juveniles who receive a term of probation as well as those returning to the community after a stay in training school.

During the time a child is in one of the schools an officer maintains a close relationship with the family in an effort to prepare for the child's return. For those children whose homes are totally inadequate for them to return to, foster homes are available. Upon the child's return to the community, the officer is readily available both to the child and his parents, or foster parents, particularly during the first few weeks of adjustment.

GROUP HOMES

Some children, who cannot cope with the intimacy of family living in their own home or in a one-child foster home, and who are unable to develop in an institutional setting, may respond more readily in a small-group setting.

The Ministry's Group Home Program provides accommodation for about 240 boys and girls in about 31 group homes. Each group home accommodates approximately six young persons, although a few homes do house more.

There is wide variety within the Group Home Program — some homes are urban, some rural, one is in a lodge, and a number are in small communities on the perimeter of Toronto. Some homes are for girls, some for boys, some co-educational, some are interdenominational and interracial, others find they are able to provide a program more attuned to the specific needs of a particular group of juveniles. For instance, one home is operated by an agency with a high percentage of Native people on the committee representing a number of treaty bands in the vicinity. The Native staff, through their training and their own experience, provide a program directed towards Native boys and girls.

Agreements are signed by the Ministry with community or private agencies which operate one or more homes with the type of program needed in the most suitable location.

RECEPTION AND ASSESSMENT CENTRE, OAKVILLE

Since it was officially opened in October, 1972 the Centre has functioned as a principal reception unit for all new admissions from the Provincial Courts (Family Division) with the exception of boys from Northern Ontario, who are admitted directly to Cecil Facer School in Sudbury. The Centre provides accommodation for 110 children in eight self-contained cottages. Two of these cottages have recently been converted to treatment units to accommodate the more disturbed population.

Upon admission the boy or girl is assigned to one of four multi-disciplinary assessment teams. During the three-to four-week period that he/she remains in the Centre, a comprehensive assessment of individual needs is carried out. After assessment is completed, program recommendations are formulated for placement of the young person in the program which will best meet his/her needs. In many cases the child is actively involved in negotiating the placement. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of the children admitted to the Centre are not placed in a training school but are released directly to some form of community placement, under supervision.

TRAINING SCHOOLS ADVISORY BOARD

The five members of this Board are appointed by Order in Council and report to the Minister on the current state of the training schools and the welfare of all wards admitted to the schools. Wardship of a student may continue until his eighteenth birthday; however, the Board, in considering each case, may make a recommendation to the Minister for termination of wardship before that age.

* Only July 1st, 1977, the Juvenile Division of the Ministry of Correctional Services was transferred to the Ministry of Community and Social Services to become part of a new division within that Ministry. The new division, named The Children's Special Services Division, has responsibility for the delivery of programs to meet the special needs of children and youth in the province.



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Training Schools in Ontario

